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SUBJECT: RESPONSE IN EGYPT TO THE PRESIDENT'S JUNE 4 ADDRESS TO THE MUSLIM WORLD

¶11. (U) SUMMARY: Egyptian audiences were deeply affected by the charisma and sincerity of the President, as well as his deep knowledge of Islam. The persistent theme was the desire to see action as a next step. END SUMMARY.

¶12. (SBU) President Obama's speech to the Muslim world, "A New Beginning," was delivered to an eclectic audience of government representatives, religious and cultural figures, students, and journalists and received a standing ovation. The most common reaction from all quarters was that they were impressed with the respectful tone towards Islam and were impressed by President Obama's sincerity and candor. They found his remarks to be radically different in their approach and tone from that of his predecessor. The prevalent reservation though, was that "we are waiting for the actions that will realize the words." A sample headline from Al Masry Al Youm was "Obama's Reconciliatory Address Satisfies All, Now It's Time for Deeds."

¶13. (SBU) At a gathering of 400-500 Egyptian businesspeople last night, a panel discussion on the speech generated universally positive responses from both the panelists and from the floor. One speaker said that President Obama has 'thrown down the gauntlet' in a clear call to break from the prison of the past and to open a new chapter in west-Islam relations. 'Are we ready to make this break?' he asked the audience. 'If we are not willing to look at ourselves critically and be willing to take the risk as president Obama seems to be, then we are doomed and have no right to criticize him or the West.' It was a clear call to positive action in response to the speech.

¶14. (SBU) At a PAO-hosted event late yesterday with students and young professors, reactions were generally positive with comments that President Obama has great charisma and intellect inspiring trust, deep knowledge, and used language that appealed to people across the board, not the usual political jargon. His Quranic verses were well-chosen, showing a scholarly knowledge of Islam. They appreciated his effort to bridge the gap between Muslims and the US, and also his commitment to fight anti-Islamic stereotypes. On Arab-Israeli issues, they recognized it was the core issue and the solution is very tough, but said that "actions must follow words."

¶15. (U) Egyptian TV carried the speech live, resulting in nationwide coverage. The state-run news agency (MENA) sent highlights from the speech via SMS text message immediately. More than 400 journalists covered the speech from the hall, and hundreds more were in a press filing center across campus. The speech dominated late night TV shows on all channels, with commentary from a variety of academics, journalists and political figures. Dr. Hala Mustafa, editor of "Democracy Journal," said, "I was glad that Obama differentiated between extremism and the majority of Muslims. It was also very impressive how he used verses from the holy Koran in his speech which reflected his respect for Islam." Ahmed Muslemany, popular TV host and a scathing critic of US policy, said "Lots of commentators

will philosophize about the speech but the bottom line is that the message went straight from Obama's heart to the heart of the man on the street."

¶6. (U) Egyptian bloggers largely focused on their perception of a disconnect between the emotional and intellectual responses to the speech. Wael Abbas tweeted, "he should have addressed reasons, not emotions. He comes and says two verses from the Koran and everyone goes crazy." Zeinobia welcomed Obama's greeting in Arabic and praised his recognition of Islamic civilization but predicted during her live blogging that "he will lose the people" with the "Holocaust talk." After the speech, she was surprised to find the "reactions of Egyptians in Facebook from regular Egyptians about the speech are positive."

¶7. (U) The Embassy website posted the Arabic- language video immediately, although the Arabic transcript wasn't available until much later. PAO Mahoney and NEA spokesman Michael Pelletier gave numerous interviews immediately after the speech at the live standup location at Cairo University, and Dalia Megahed was interviewed extensively after the speech.

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